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TO BE OR NOT TO BE "SUBTLY" PHILOSOPHICALLY COLONIZED*[1]

SER OU NÃO SER "SUTILMENTE" COLONIZADO FILOSOFICAMENTE

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ABSTRACT *An often-adopted use of the predicate, "to be colonized", is one that applies it loosely, not in reference to original Africans or indigenous people enslaved by Europeans or heirs of enslaved persons, but to academics who are citizens of former colonies like Brazil, their ways of thinking, philosophical works, academic communities, etc. But under what conditions one is to do that? And how can one avoid the attribution of such predicate to oneself or one's works? These issues have not received much attention. While dialoguing with authors associated with decolonial studies, Brazilian, continental and analytic philosophers, this essay aims to contribute to change this situation. It does so by proposing an alternative use of the predicate, "to be 'subtly' philosophically colonized", according to which this predicate is to be applied to philosophical works that have the thirteen features described in the essay or at least most of them. It is argued that this alternative use is to be endorsed because it is: precise; exemplified in a detailed way by at least one philosophical work; and*

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"inexplosive" in not suggesting the "explosive" claim that practically all Western philosophical works are colonized by Western metaphysics.

Keywords *Coloniality. Decoloniality. Conditions. Predicate-attribution. Brazilian philosophy.*

RESUMO *Um uso recorrente do predicado, "ser colonizado", é um que o aplica imprecisamente, não em referência aos africanos e aos povos indígenas originais escravizados pelos europeus ou a descendentes de pessoas escravizadas, mas, sim, a acadêmicos que são cidadãos de ex-colônias como o Brasil, seus modos de pensar, trabalhos filosóficos, comunidades acadêmicas etc. Mas sob quais condições se deve proceder desse modo? E como é possível evitar que tal predicado seja atribuído a si ou a um trabalho autoral? Essas questões não têm recebido muita atenção. Ao dialogar com autores associados aos estudos decoloniais, filósofos brasileiros, continentais e analíticos, este artigo procura contribuir para mudar essa situação. Ele assim o faz ao propor um uso alternativo do predicado, "ser 'sutilmente' colonizado filosoficamente", segundo o qual esse predicado deve ser aplicado em referência a trabalhos filosóficos que possuem as treze características descritas neste artigo ou ao menos a maioria delas. Argumenta-se que esse uso alternativo deve ser aceito porque ele é: preciso; exemplificado de modo detalhado por ao menos um trabalho filosófico; e "inexplosivo" ao não sugerir a alegação "explosiva" de que praticamente todos os trabalhos filosóficos ocidentais são colonizados pela metafísica ocidental.*

Palavras-chave: *Colonialismo. Decolonialismo. Condições. Atribuição de predicado. Filosofia brasileira.*

Introduction

Consider three expressions: $<_{\text{Original}}$ Colonized>, $<_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> and <Colonized>. This essay uses them as shorts: respectively, for 'the predicate, "to be colonized in the sense that one's personhood was not recognized by an original European'"; 'the predicate, "to be an heir of someone to whom $<_{\text{Original}}$ Colonized> is attributable'"; and 'the quite broad predicate "to be colonized'". Authors usually associated with "*decolonial studies*",[2] such as Anibal Quijano

2 This italicized expression is problematic. As Walter D. Mignolo underlines, "decoloniality is not an academic discipline". So, "decolonial studies could not be decolonial — it's as simple as that —for what would decolonial

(2000), Catherine E. Walsh (2018) and Walter D. Mignolo (2018, 2020), have not explicitly distinguished these predicates (Mignolo, 2018, p. 106). Let us do that as well as assume that other is a relational notion. More precisely, x is the other of y if and only if x and y are persons who (at least at their first encounter) do not seem to share certain common characteristics. Examples of such characteristics are a: criterion to deal with disputes associable with philosophy (hereafter, disputes); religion; concept of 'God'; science; technology; architecture; language; moral code; dressing code; culinary; sexual practice; skin colour; etc. Arguably, as Quijano indicates, it was the acknowledgment of this lack of common characteristics (especially, the phenotypic one of having a particular color of skin) that led to the introduction of the concept of 'race' — a notion that "in its modern meaning, does not have a known history before the colonization of America", and "became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power" (Quijano, 2000, pp. 534, 535).

By original Europeans, let us understand those who have three features. To begin with, they were born in Europe, roughly, sometime between the 15th and 19th centuries. They also navigated to lands where they encountered their others: original indigenous peoples and original Africans.[3] Respectively, these were persons who lived in the pieces of land that became known as 'America' and 'Africa'. Original Europeans also more or less explicitly presupposed and judged their others under the assumption that they were more or less valuable insofar as their characteristics more or less resembled those of original Europeans, that is, original Europeans took themselves to be a standard that their others should fulfill. Failure to do so was taken to be a sign of lack of personhood or humanity. In Mignolo's terms, original Europeans "define [d] themselves as human and impose [d] their self-referential description as standard for all living organisms of the same species" (Mignolo, 2018, p. 159). In a similar vein, Quijano highlights that "the foundational myth of the Eurocentric version of modernity is the idea of the state of nature as the point of departure for the civilized course of history whose culmination is European or Western civilization" (Quijano, 2020, p. 551).

The attribution of $<_{\text{Original}}$ Colonized> to original indigenous peoples and original Africans is not particularly problematic. The fact that these persons'

studies be and above all in what political, ethical, and epistemic frame would it be enacted?" (Mignolo, 2018, p. 106).

3 Let us underline with Mignolo that "Indians and Blacks (Africans) were the Spaniards' mental constructs for homogenizing the extreme diversity of the people inhabiting the New World (where the Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas all manifested a thousand years of heterogeneous history in their three areas)" (Mignolo, 2018, p. 182).

personhoods were not recognized by original Europeans has been well-documented and described in detail. For instance, by the aforementioned authors as well as by the likes of W.E.B. Du Bois (2007), Franz Fanon (1952), Achille Mbembe (2017), etc. The latter argues that "the experience of servitude means being placed forcefully in the zone of undifferentiation between human and animal" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 152). In pointing to a similar direction, Mignolo claims that "slavery was justified via narratives that figured Africans as less than human so they could be treated like animals" (Mignolo, 2018, p. 141). According to Quijano, "the fact is that from the very beginning of the colonization of America, Europeans associated nonpaid or nonwaged labor with the dominated races because they were 'inferior' races" (Quijano, 2000, p. 538). It is also hardly disputable that original Europeans coerced original indigenous peoples and original Africans into performing actions (say, to work in a sugar mill as a slave) while resorting to corporeal upfront forms of violence, such as that of lacerating the flesh of one's back as a punishment for resisting coercion. This kind of violence may not have been experienced by 20th or 21st century descendants of original indigenous peoples and original Africans. However, historical observation indicates that though such descendants have not been enslaved, they have, to speak euphemistically, struggled with all sorts of issues. An example is that as Du Bois (2011), Fanon (1952), Malcolm X (1973), Lélia Gonzalez (2020), Angela Davis (1998) and Cornel West (1999) discuss, descendants of original Africans have often had an inferiority complex vis-à-vis original Europeans and/or their heirs. Among other things, this inferiority complex has compelled these descendants to seek (even at the cost of a self-inflicted pain) to make their curly hairs appear straight.[4] As discussed by Maria Beatriz Correa Neves and Marco Antonio Calil Machado (2017), Nathanael Ojong (2020), Yin Paradies (2020) and Ailton Krenak (2020), descendants of original indigenous peoples have also often lived in narrowly demarcated pieces of land that make it hard for them to live independently of European influence and in accordance with their cultures' values. It follows that the attribution of $<_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> to descendants of original indigenous peoples and original Africans is likewise not particularly problematic.

The same cannot be stated about the attribution of <Colonized> to: a 20th or 21st century citizen of a former colony like Brazil to whom $<_{\text{Original}}$ Colonized>

4 See X (1973, p. 56). Also consider a 1930's poem by Manuel Bandeira, "Irene no céu" ("Irene in Heaven"): "Black Irene / Good Irene / Irene always in a good mood. / I imagine Irene entering heaven: / — Excuse me, my white man! / And Saint Peter, easy-going: / — Come in, Irene. You don't have to excuse yourself" (Bandeira, 1973, p. 125). All translations from Portuguese are ours.

and sometimes even <$_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> is not attributable, and/or to such a person's (who may be an academic) thinking, philosophical work, academic community, etc. Consider the likes of Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant (1998); Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2014); Peter Pál Pelbart (2012); José Crisóstomo de Souza (2020, 2021); Paulo Margutti (2020); etc. These authors have championed the last stated predicate-attribution while using differently or more or less implicitly suggesting distinct uses of <Colonized>.[5] This attitude raises two disputes. The first is over the conditions for attributing to something <Colonized> or other similar predicates, such as: <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized>. The latter expression is used in this essay as a short for: 'the predicate, "to be "subtly" philosophically colonized'". The term 'subtly' is used here between double quotation marks in a slightly ironic way. That is to serve to highlight that though this kind of philosophical coloniality is not as easily identifiable as those that justify the attribution of <$_{\text{Original}}$ Colonized> to original indigenous peoples and original Africans or <$_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> to their descendants, this philosophical coloniality is quite explicitly present in certain works, as it will be shown in what follows. Terms, such as 'philosophically' or 'philosophical', are used in this essay to qualify that which concerns disputes, even if such disputes may be interdisciplinary. The second dispute is the overcoming one on how one can proceed in a more decolonized way in avoiding the attribution of predicates, such as <Colonized> or <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized>, to oneself, one's philosophical works, etc.

5 Bourdieu and Wacquant connect "imperialist reason" to the capacity of imposing quite particular concepts (e.g., the USA's concept of "race") as if such concepts were universally applicable to all contexts, say, Brazilian contexts (Bourdieu; Wacquant, 1998, p. 109). This is to suggest that <Colonized> or the predicate 'to be dominated by an imperialist reason' is to be used in reference to those (e.g., Brazilian activists) who do not realize that and adopt such concepts. Under the influence of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), Viveiros de Castro argues that "Western metaphysics is truly the *fons et origo* of every colonialism" (Viveiros de Castro, 2014, p. 44). So, he proposes a "permanent decolonization of thought" (*ibid*., p. 92). In doing so, he appears to implicitly use <Colonized> in reference to any thought that has been colonized by "Western metaphysics", say, in seeking to address non-Europeans like the "Amerindians" by presupposing "dualisms", such as "nature" and 'society" (*ibid*., p. 108). Pál Pelbart (2012, p. 9) points to a direction similar to Viveiros de Castro's. On his part, Souza argues that: "our philosophical work [that is, that of contemporary Brazilian philosophers] appears now even more canonical, hierarchical, *colonized* and, finally, more strictly one of commentary than at the colonial and scholastic in strict sense beginning" (Souza, 2020, p. 13, our emphasis). This is to apply <Colonized> to philosophical works written by Brazilian philosophers that comment on works written by non-Brazilian philosophers without seeking to articulate innovative theses of their own. In another article, Souza also claims that Brazilian philosophers "primarily make philosophy insofar as a passive reading of authors — of the historical, canonical, everlasting or taken to be so philosophers" (Souza, 2021, p. 34). Margutti's conclusion is that the Brazilian philosophical community "with few and honorable exceptions, reveals itself to be considerably dominated by a European ethnocentrism and has produced mainly a *colonized* thinking in most of our [that is, Brazilian] universities" (Margutti, 2020, p. 138, our emphasis). This is evidence that Margutti applies <Colonized> to the Brazilian philosophical "thought" and "community" insofar as they would have been dominated by an "European ethnocentrism".

It is not surprising that the authors named in the last paragraph have not used <Colonized> in the same way. Consider the 500th verse of Euripides's *Phoenician Women*: "if all agreed with what is wise and what is just then there'd be no disputes between men" (Euripides, 2012, p. 11). This verse points to a claim that is as hardly disputable today as it was in Ancient Greece. The claim is that several (if not most or all) core philosophical terms (e.g., 'wise' and 'just') have no "ordinary" meaning shared by all.[6] The same seems to be the case regarding terms, such as *egalitarian tendencies*, *libertarian tendencies*, *left-wing*, *right-wing* or <Colonized>.[7] So, it seems problematic to seek to back up a use of such predicate or other closely related ones like $<_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> under a strict descriptive basis by, say, relying on a dictionary and arguing that this use is the "ordinary" one. It seems more pertinent to acknowledge that any use of <Colonized> or other closely related predicates is to be justified by appealing to perspectival normative constraints that concern what a predicate is to do for the one who proposes its attribution to something. So, there may be several pertinent normative constraints for the use of <Colonized> or $<_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized>. Examples of such constraints are that such use should be:

(C-i) Precise in allowing one to explicitly distinguish it from less controversial uses of predicates, such as that of attributing $<_{\text{Original}}$ Colonized> to original indigenous peoples and Africans and $<_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> to their descendants.

(C-ii) Exemplified in a detailed way by at least one object, say, a philosophical work, so that the requirements for avoiding <Colonized> or $<_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> being attributable to one's works become explicit.

(C-iii) "Inexplosive" in not suggesting the "explosive" claim that <Colonized> or $<_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> is attributable to practically all Western philosophical works — including those written by contemporary European authors who, say, embrace a Western metaphysics that presupposes traditional dualisms. For example, that of nature and society.

These constraints seem (at least to me) pertinent enough for deserving attention. Furthermore, no author (at least not as far as I know) has proposed the rejection of any broad appeal to <Colonized> and the endorsement of a more

6 Under the label 'conceptual engineering', analytic philosophers, such as those who contributed to the essays gathered in Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen and David Plunkett (2020)), have recently pointed to this claim. They have done so while more or less implicitly problematizing those (e.g., Eli Hirsch (2011)) who seek to deal with disputes by appealing to the rules of a so-called "ordinary" language. For explicit objections to Hirsch's (2011) appeal to "ordinary" language, consider my own, Felipe G. A. Moreira (2014).

7 Throughout my PhD dissertation (Moreira 2019a), I defended the particular use of these italicized terms assumed in what follows.

precise use of <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> that attributes the latter predicate exclusively to philosophical works under a particular basis: that broad appeals to <Colonized> violate, whereas the more specific use of <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> satisfies (C-i) to (C-iii). This essay then champions this use in indicating that it serves to differentiate a kind of philosophical work that (at least insofar as I am concerned) is to be avoided insofar as it allows one to attribute <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> to it from a work that does not allow one to do that and, hence, seems more pertinent. In proceeding in such a way, the essay defends two philosophical claims. The first concerns the dispute over conditions: that a philosophical work (as opposed to a person) is to have <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> attributed to itself if the work has thirteen features or at least most of these features. The second philosophical claim defended in this essay is on the overcoming dispute: that one can avoid the attribution of this predicate to one's philosophical works by articulating works that do not have these features, regardless of whether one is (to put it in more informal terms) "better off" in doing so.

On Being "Subtly" Philosophically Colonized

A philosophical work is to have <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> attributed to itself if the work has thirteen features or at least most of them. Let us spell these features out, while discussing, it is important to emphasize, not a person, but a philosophical work that has all of these features: a 2011 essay by the Brazilian philosopher Fernando José Fagundes Ribeiro (2011) (hereafter, Ribeiro's essay).[8] Note that this procedure resembles that of Rudolf Carnap (1959) who illustrates his view on the dispute on whether metaphysical claims are meaningless by focusing on a work by Martin Heidegger (1993) that ignores this dispute.

8 Fernando was a professor of philosophy at Federal Fluminense University in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro. I met him in 2004 when I was an undergraduate student at this institution. I took classes and participated in study groups organized by him. He became my mentor. He worked as an advisor to my undergraduate monograph. We were friends. We philosophically dialogued with one another. My philosophical debts to Fernando are incommensurable; he was the first to spell out to me the possibility of having a life dedicated to philosophy. Evidently, Fernando himself as a person is not "reducible" to Ribeiro's essay. Indeed, at least in my view, the latter does not show Fernando's "true philosophy", which was only spelled out in dialogues that I had the privilege to join and whose discussion would require another essay. What justifies the focus on Ribeiro's essay as opposed to any other work written by Fernando is the fact that according to his *Curriculum Lattes*, this essay was the latest of his five most important works. See URL: http://buscatextual.cnpq.br/buscatextual/visualizacv.do?id=K4767760A6. Site consulted in February 2022. Let me also underline that Fernando passed away on October 5th of 2018. He was 53 years old. As a member of the political party, PCO (*Partido da Causa Operária*), he was a candidate for the Brazilian Senate. The causes of his death were complications related to a stroke he had during a political debate. That was announced by the press. See URL: https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/morre-fernando-fagundes-candidato-ao-senado-do-pco-pelo-rio-23133524. Site consulted in February 2022.

Accordingly, it may be objected that it is "problematic" to focus on Ribeiro's essay as a way to illustrate one's view on a dispute (that is, the aforementioned one over conditions) that is not considered by Ribeiro's essay itself. To begin with, let us reply to this objection by underlying that like Carnap did vis-à-vis Heidegger, the current essay seeks to back up its view on Ribeiro's essay by providing textual evidence. In other words, the features attributed to this essay can be plausibly read as "being there"; they were not fabricated. Hence, regardless of whether Ribeiro's essay addresses the condition dispute, it is hard to understand why the procedure of pointing to these features would be "problematic". Another reason for resisting this objection is that like Carnap's, the procedure adopted here does not impede others to proceed differently, say, by proposing a distinct reading according to which Ribeiro's essay does not have the features attributed to it here or by championing distinct ways of applying <"Subtly" Philosophically Colonized>. Indeed, the focus on Ribeiro's essay serves to oppose a forgetfulness policy: that of making Brazilian philosophers be forgotten *qua* philosophers (especially after their deaths) by ignoring their works, say, under the assumption that such works are not valuable enough, not even to be criticized, or that it is "impolite" to do so.[9] Evidence that this assumption is widely shared is provided by the fact that works by Brazilian philosophers have not been often criticized or even discussed, not even by Brazilian philosophers.[10] In addition, arguably, Ribeiro's essay is just one among countless other essays written by Brazilian philosophers that have the thirteen features debated here.[11] Due to space constraints, though, the current essay cannot back this last claim up. What can be stated is that, biographically speaking, I may have written works that have similar features, at least when I was an undergraduate student.[12] In fact, in being partially educated in Brazil, I (and arguably countless others) felt more or less implicitly constrained to do that as if the claim that one ought to proceed in such a fashion were a "subtly" philosophically colonial imperative. Thus, to criticize Ribeiro's essay is not to criticize the work of the other. Rather, to object to this essay is to somehow self-criticize myself in problematizing a way of doing philosophy that significantly influenced my own.

9 It has been more than three years since Fernando passed away. No one (at least not as far as I know) has addressed any of his works in detail.

10 For an exception, see Souza (2021) and the other articles gathered at the "Dossiê: Filosofia do Brasil" of the philosophical journal, *Argumentos*, Fortaleza, Ano 13, n. 25, Jan./Jun. 2021.

11 Consider that as Marcelo Carvalho indicates, Michel Foucault once ironically remarked that the Brazilian academic work seems to have been done by "un département français d'outre-mer", that is, a "French department overseas" (Carvalho, 2012, p. 126).

12 Consider Moreira (2008), my undergraduate monography which I defended back in 2008 at Federal Fluminense University under Fernando's guidance.

The first feature is: *lack of an explicit conflictual motivation vis-à-vis a scholarly community that is foreign vis-à-vis the nationality of the author of the philosophical work* (hereafter, foreign). By a conflictual motivation, let us understand that of seeking in an upfront way to: contradict what has been defended or presupposed by a scholarly community; and/or to add something, such as a new claim or practice, that this community is to consider. An example of a scholarly community is what may be called the Baudelairian one. This is the considerably broad, international and interdisciplinary community of: philosophers (e.g., Walter Benjamin (2017) and Michel Foucault (1984)), psychoanalysts (e.g., Jacques-Alain Miller (2002)), literary critics (e.g., Bo Liu (2004)), etc., who have been interested in the 19th century poetic and critical corpus of Charles Baudelaire (2019). Ribeiro's essay alludes to this foreign community. For instance, this essay claims that: "the affinity between Baudelaire and psychoanalysis is [a] not superficial and [b] exceeds to great extent the scope of curious analogies" (Fagundes Ribeiro, 2011, p. 162). This passage tentatively alludes to the motivation of contradicting or adding something to the Baudelairian community in showing that the stated affinity is characterized by (a) and (b). However, this motivation is not an explicit conflictual one. This is so insofar as Ribeiro's essay provides no evidence that the members of such community have rejected that the affinity between Baudelaire and psychoanalysis is characterized by (a) and (b). Furthermore, Ribeiro's essay does not indicate in an upfront way what such members would gain by considering this affinity to be characterized by (a) and (b). Metaphorically, it is as if this essay aimed to tread extremely softly to not be noticed by anyone, including members of the Baudelairian community.

The second feature is: *excessively unprecise articulation of a dispute that seems to seek to appeal to members of a foreign scholarly community*. Consider again the passage by Ribeiro's essay quoted above. This passage is evidence that this essay addresses the affinity dispute on whether the affinity between Baudelaire and psychoanalysis is characterized by (a) and (b). The articulation by Ribeiro's essay of this dispute is an excessively unprecise one. This is because, to begin with, this essay applies the term 'psychoanalysis' in a considerably loose way without distinguishing, for instance, all sorts of noticeable differences between works by the likes of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek. To mark this looseness, the term 'psychoanalysis' will hereafter be applied between double quotation marks. Furthermore, Ribeiro's essay does not spell out what is meant by (a) and (b), that is, this essay does not indicate what a "superficial affinity" is; what the stated "curious analogies" are; and how their "scope" is exceeded. Given such factors and that the main

philosophical claim of Ribeiro's essay is that the affinity between Baudelaire and "psychoanalysis" is characterized by (a) and (b), this essay also has the third feature: namely, *defense of an excessively unprecise philosophical claim that also seems to seek to appeal to members of a foreign scholarly community*.

Given that Ribeiro's essay has this third feature, it also has the fourth one: *to make it easy for an opponent, such as a member of a foreign scholarly community, to read its main philosophical claim or claims as being somehow trivial*. Let us assume that a philosophical claim is trivial if it is hard to identify a contemporary member of a scholarly community (addressed by the work at stake in which the claim is made) who has two characteristics. To begin with, this member is or may be interested in the dispute that the claim at stake seeks to answer. Moreover, this member has reasons for rejecting the claim, say, insofar as it lacks, contradicts or adds to what such member's works defend or suggest. Let us also suppose — for the sake of argument and regardless of the fact that Ribeiro's essay does not state so — that an affinity between x and y can be characterized by (a) and (b) if and only if x and y point to at least four common philosophical claims. Given the third feature, Ribeiro's essay may be "charitably" read to suggest that the affinity between Baudelaire and "psychoanalysis" is characterized by (a) and (b) because Baudelaire and "psychoanalysis" point to four common philosophical claims. *Pace* "French painters of landscapes", (i) no reality can be described independently of an observer's perspective (Fagundes Ribeiro, 2011, p. 163). *Pace* "romantics", (ii) no appeal to an over-idealized past is to be made (*ibid*., p. 162). *Pace* "symbolists", (iii) no "intuition" can grasp the ""unspeakable" mystery of Being" (*ibid*., p. 166). And, *pace* the "bourgeois society of the 19th century", (iv) there is no "progress" (*ibid*., p.168). Ribeiro's essay seems to presuppose that "psychoanalysis" is committed to such claims. Suppose that this is so as well as that this essay correctly spells out in its four first sections that Baudelaire points to (i) to (iv), respectively. Granted these moves, it is easy for one to read the main philosophical claim of Ribeiro's essay as being somehow trivial. That happens because it is hard to identify a contemporary member of the Baudelairian community who would reject that Baudelaire points to (i) to (iv). This is not to state that no reader (say, in the 19th century) has never read Baudelaire to contradict these claims. However, even if this is so, Ribeiro's essay does not indicate who these readers would be.

Given that Ribeiro's essay has the stated third feature, it also has the fifth one: *to make it easy for an opponent, such as a member of a foreign scholarly community, to read its main philosophical claim or claims as being false*. Suppose that an affinity between x and y can only be characterized by (a) and (b) if and only if it fulfils conditions distinct from the ones stated in the last

paragraph, such as the stricter condition that: x and y support quite unique philosophical claims that exclusively x and y defend. Granted this move as well as that "psychoanalysis" and Baudelaire are committed to (i) to (iv), Ribeiro's essay provides reasons for one to read its main philosophical claim as being false. This occurs because, not only "psychoanalysis", but several (if not most) 20th century continental philosophers (e.g, Benjamin, Foucault, etc.) also pointed to (i) to (iv).[13] The sixth feature is: *to primarily restate claims of a well-established bibliography articulated by a foreign scholarly community*. Ribeiro's essay does so vis-à-vis the bibliography articulated by members of the Baudelairian community. Evidence that this is the case is provided by the fact that this essay has the other five stated features, especially the first and the fourth one. Another reason for attributing the sixth feature to Ribeiro's essay is the explicit presence in this essay of the seventh feature: *excessive use of quotations from works by members of a foreign scholarly community*. Indeed, practically all pages of this essay have long quotations with more than three lines. Thus, metaphorically speaking, this philosophical work aims to let the voice of others (especially, "psychoanalysis") speak through it as if in an echo. This echo often sounds like a caricatured voice of Lacan. For instance, a passage from Ribeiro's essay runs as follows:

> According to psychoanalysis [in the stated broad sense], the *phantom* "makes a screen" for the *real* to impede our *traumatic conflict* with the *desire of the Other* as well as to act like a sort of surface of projection where the *emptiness within the Other* is dislocated and dissimulated in giving consistency to that which we understand as reality (Fagundes Ribeiro, 2011, p. 162, our emphasis).

Now let us consider an objection that has often been made to authors often quoted by Ribeiro, such as Lacan. This is the obscurity objection: that in relying on an obscure use of language that often resorts to undefined technical terms that resist interpretation, these authors champion authoritarian practices. For instance, that of manipulating naïve students into believing that they have an extremely sophisticated way of thinking that students can never comprehend.[14] That practice minimizes what may be called egalitarian tendencies: those of either consciously or unconsciously contributing to create a universal community that defends the interests of all entities or persons, while seeking to attenuate one's own singularity and/or the singularity of others.

13 However, for a continental problematization of (i), see Quentin Meillassoux (2006).

14 As I indicate elsewhere (Moreira (2018, 2020)), Carnap (1959) suggests that Heidegger (1993) did so. This objection has also been addressed to continental philosophers in general. Consider Timothy Williamson (2007, p. 290).

The present essay suspends judgment on whether the obscurity objection applies to Lacan. It is yet crucial to underline that Lacan maximized what may be called libertarian tendencies: those of consciously or unconsciously acting in accordance and contributing to bring about one's own singularity and/or those of others, while problematizing the constraints that any particular community imposes upon such singularities. Lacan did so by creating a unique terminology that (at least in the 1950s and 60s) played a "modernist" role: that of "shocking" people, especially, distinguished members of France's intellectual community who were not familiar with Lacan's technical terms.[15] By its turn, Ribeiro's essay seems to minimize libertarian tendencies. This is so in that it takes for granted a use of a Lacanian terminology characterized by its adoption of several technical terms like the italicized ones of the last quote that are not defined or are pseudo-defined by other technical terms. In doing so, Ribeiro's essay (published in 2011) is unlike to play a "modernist" role, especially vis-à-vis those who are educated enough to identify a Lacanian terminology, and/or are aware that Lacan has been an intellectual authority for decades.

Ribeiro's essay has then the eighth feature: *problematic adoption of an undefined technical terminology of a foreign intellectual authority*. This adoption is problematic because it may serve to champion another authoritarian practice that minimizes egalitarian tendencies: that of an author/professor who manipulates naïve readers/students (from one's own nationality) into believing that there is a foreign intellectual authority whose philosophical thinking is extremely sophisticated and, so, cannot be comprehended by such readers/students and even by the author/professor at stake. Note that there have been those to whom $<_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> may be applied and who have not been aware that they have suffered from the stated inferiority complex.[16] Analogously, there may have been authors/professors who are unaware that they have championed the last stated practice. Consider a verse from "*L'Héautontimorouménos*" ("The Self-Torturer"), a poem from Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*) addressed in Ribeiro's essay: "*Je suis la plaie et le couteau!*" ["I am the wound and the knife"] (Fagundes Ribeiro, 2011, p. 162).[17] In metaphorical terms, the aforementioned authors/professors are: wounds and knifes; knifes that used to be wounds; and/or wounded knifes stuck in a wounded knife cycle.

15 I developed a more detailed take on the obscurity objection and its connection with modernism in Moreira (2019a, 2019b).

16 In this sense, consider, especially, X (1973).

17 Note that Fernando translated Baudelaire to Portuguese. See Fagundes Ribeiro (2014).

The ninth feature is: *to act as if contemporary works by those who contradict and/or are others regarding the foreign intellectual authority at stake were non-existent, worthy of reply and/or of mention.* This is to do what may be called a "subtly" philosophically colonized "subtle" violence vis-à-vis such others. Evidence that Ribeiro's essay expresses this violence is provided by the fact that this essay indeed proceeds as if contemporary works that more or less implicitly reject claims, such as (i) to (iv), were non-existent, worthy of reply and/or mention. It could be objected that given that Ribeiro's essay aims to spell out the stated affinity between Baudelaire and "psychoanalysis", it is irrelevant whether it expresses such a philosophically colonized "subtle" violence. A reply to this objection is that otherwise is the case, especially because Ribeiro's essay would likely not have some of the aforementioned features (especially, the first and the fourth one) were it to have aimed to show that there is a conflictual motivation for defending (i) to (iv). This motivation would show that there still are and that it is motivated to contradict those who reject such claims. Consider, for example, (iv), the claim that there is no progress. According to Timothy Williamson, "in many areas of philosophy, we know much more in 2007 than was known in 1957" (Williamson, 2007, p. 280). This is to suggest that there is some sort of philosophical progress. So, were Ribeiro's essay to show that Baudelaire's works or "psychoanalysis" can be used to cast doubt on Williamson's view, <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> would be less easily attributable to it. However, this essay simply ignores the analytic tradition.

The tenth feature is: *to presuppose a foreign intellectual authority's controversial reading of another foreign intellectual authority.* Ribeiro's essay has this feature because it takes for granted a controversial reading of René Descartes that, this essay suggests, was developed by "psychoanalysis". Without providing textual evidence that the likes of Freud, Lacan or Žižek endorse such reading, Ribeiro's essay points to it by making disputable claims about Descartes, such as that: "in psychoanalytic terms, it could be stated that the doubt submits him [Descartes] to a radical process of hystericization" (Fagundes Ribeiro, 2011, p. 176). This passage is evidence that Ribeiro's essay also has another feature closely connected to the tenth one; the eleventh feature: *that of being unaware or not explicitly indicating that to presuppose a foreign intellectual authority's controversial reading of another foreign authority is problematic.* This move makes a philosophical work appear quite unpersuasive insofar as it may be problematized by anyone who is educated enough to be familiar with the foreign intellectual authorities at stake. Imagine someone familiar with Descartes' and Lacan's works and with the core literature on them. Imagine that this person has a distinct reading of Descartes and disagrees with the last

quoted claim by Ribeiro's essay. This person has reasons for taking Ribeiro's essay to lack persuasion. This occurs because this essay does not provide any strong reason (if any reason at all) for endorsing its "psychoanalytic" reading of Descartes.

The twelfth feature somehow follows from the previous ones; it is *lack of contemporaneity*. Contemporaneity, let us assume, is a property of a philosophical work that does not lose track of its own historical context. Ribeiro's essay lacks this property because it does not underline that Lacan is an intellectual authority whose "modernist" moves have been widely repeated throughout the 20th century; does not seem to be aware that several 20th century continental philosophers have also suggested (i) to (iv); ignores the fact that the analytic tradition is hardly ignorable in that even in France this tradition has been increasingly spread, e.g., by Claudine Tiercelin (2002) and François Recanati (2010) who both have chairs at the *Collège de France*; etc. The thirteenth feature is what may be called an *unjustified provincialism* — a property of a philosophical work that seems to seek but is hardly accessible for international scrutiny for apparently no strong reason. Evidence that Ribeiro's essay also has this feature is provided by a fact: that this essay has the aforementioned twelve features and though it is mainly concerned with the quite international Baudelairian community (as opposed to a more Brazilian one), it is written in a non-canonical language of philosophy that most members of the Baudelairian community do not master. By a non-canonical language of philosophy, it is understood one that is not usually mastered by philosophers whose first language is not it, regardless of such language's number of users, which may be millions. Portuguese, the language of Ribeiro's essay, is an example of this kind of language. Now let us highlight that the current essay does not defend the, arguably, absurd thesis that one should never write philosophical works in a non-canonical language, say, Portuguese. There seem to be several reasons for doing so, such as: to introduce core disputes to undergraduate and/or to low-income students who only master a non-canonical language of philosophy; to spell out the unique literary resources of this language; to motivate disputes that mainly concern speakers of such language; etc. Works that pursue these aims may be justifiably provincial, that is, they may have strong reasons for being hardly accessible for international scrutiny. Ribeiro's essay yet does not seem to pursue these aims. This is why it is hard to take it to be justifiably provincial.[18]

18 Despite the thirteen features that were attributed to Ribeiro's essay, the reading proposed here does not aim to be exhaustive; several factors of this essay were not contemplated. An example is this essay's comparison of Baudelaire with "certain characters of Tarkovsky who pray targeting the floor" (Fagundes Ribeiro, 2011, p. 167).

On Not-Being "Subtly" Philosophically Colonized

It follows that a precise way of using <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> is one that takes the aforementioned thirteen features to be individually necessary and conjunctly sufficient for this predicate's attribution to a philosophical work. This use may yet be excessively precise. The reason is that one may be inclined and there may be reasons for attributing <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> to works that do not have all but only most of these features. For example, a work that has the twelve first features but not the thirteenth one in being written in English. So, this essay supports a still considerably (though not excessively) precise claim: that if a philosophical work has all or at least most of the stated thirteen features, <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> is attributable to it. This essay also does not take any of such features to be a necessary condition for the attribution of this predicate. Rather, these features are merely taken to be plausible reasons for doing so. Moreover, let us be neutral on whether any of these features is more or less crucial than others for the attribution of <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> to a philosophical work as well as on whether this predicate poses a dispute of degree: the dispute on whether <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> can be more or less attributable to a work so that the property of being "subtly" philosophical colonized is a degree property, that is, one that philosophical works can have from a lower to a higher degree.

More importantly, one can avoid having <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> been attributable to one's philosophical works by articulating works that do not have the aforementioned thirteen features. Throughout the present essay, I have aimed to illustrate how one can do that in articulating a philosophical work which has none of these features. Let me now explicitly spell this out. To begin with, the present essay has an explicit *conflictual motivation vis-à-vis a foreign (but also national regarding myself) scholarly community*: that of Brazilian and non-Brazilian authors who are interested in coloniality and decoloniality (hereafter, $_{\text{co/decoloniality}}$ community). This motivation is that of contradicting and/or adding something to the works of the members of such community, especially to those that have more or less implicitly loosely attributed <Colonized> to Brazilian college professors, their works, community, etc. This has been done here insofar as it has been championed a use of <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> that satisfies the stated three constraints, (C-i) to (C-iii). Respectively, these constraints are those according to which the use of this predicate should be: precise; exemplified in a detailed way by at least one object; and "inexplosive". Moreover, *the two disputes addressed here (the conditions and the overcoming one) seem to have been articulated in a sufficiently precise way that seeks to appeal to members of the* $_{\textit{co/decoloniality}}$ *community*. The *same can be stated about*

this essay's two core philosophical claims. Indeed, it is to be clear by now that the use of <"Subtly" Philosophically Colonized> endorsed here is: precise in being distinguishable from looser uses of <Colonized> championed by other authors; exemplified in a detailed way by Ribeiro's essay; and "inexplosive" in not leading to the "explosive" claim that <"Subtly" Philosophically Colonized> is attributable to practically all Western philosophical works.

This predicate, for instance, is not attributable to works by traditional philosophers (e.g., Descartes) and by the likes of Freud, Lacan, Žižek, etc. On the other hand, a plausible belief is that <"Subtly" Philosophically Colonized> is attributable to several (if not most) philosophical works whose authors share an identity with Fagundes Ribeiro: that of being philosophers and citizens of former colonies, such as Brazil. However, as indicated above, whether and to which extent this belief is warranted are complex empirical matters; they can only be settled by a thorough empirical research that cannot be developed here. For this essay's purposes, it suffices to underline that apparently there have also been works by authors with Fagundes Ribeiro's stated identity to which <"Subtly" Philosophically Colonized> cannot be attributed.[19] This predicate is also not exclusively attributable to works by authors with such an identity, and/or to those to whom <Heir of a Colonized> is attributable. In principle, <"Subtly" Philosophically Colonized> is also attributable to philosophers who are citizens of Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, Italy, etc. Indeed, this predicate may be attributed even to French or German philosophers who, say, have been "excessively" influenced by English-speaking analytic philosophers. However, to give examples of such works is beyond the scope of the present essay.

What is crucial here is to emphasize that it also *does not seem easy for an opponent to read this essay's two main philosophical claims as being somehow trivial or false*. This is not to state that this essay accomplishes what is likely impossible: to articulate a philosophical work that is immune to objection. For instance, an opponent may champion an alternative use of <Colonized>. This use, say, could show that the present essay is, after all, "colonized" in a distinct sense, say, insofar as: it relies on resources somehow similar to those used in analytic philosophy and its very aim of avoiding the stated thirteen features seems to be a very traditional European one shared by practically all core Western philosophers from Plato to Gilles Deleuze. This opponent, though, would have the burden of showing: that the stated (so to speak) "analytic-like" resources are to be avoided; that there are philosophical works (say, by Eastern

19 As Souza (2021) indicates, consider Oswaldo Porchat (2007) or Roberto Mangabeira Unger (2014).

philosophers) that pertinently cast doubt on the aim stated in this paragraph; that there are plausible constraints for this alternative use of <Colonized>; that these constraints are more pertinent than the ones endorsed here; that one's very work (like the present essay) self-illustrates the kind of philosophy it champions; that it is possible and pertinent for a Latin American author to articulate a philosophical work that has no "European-like" feature; etc. It may not be impossible, but it is not easy to accomplish this task.

The same can be stated about a task that is not pursued in this essay: that of showing that one is necessarily "better off" in articulating works to which $<_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> is not attributable. To spell out that this task is challenging, consider the fact that, roughly, from the 15th to the 19th century, a claim was widely shared among original Europeans: that original indigenous peoples and original Africans to whom $<_{\text{Original}}$ Colonized> was attributable were "better off" in being enslaved.[20] In fact, it is plausible to believe that during these centuries there were at least a few original indigenous peoples, original Africans and/or their heirs who also embraced this claim. Few yet would defend such a claim today. The same can be stated about other claims: that descendants of original Africans to whom $<_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> is attributable are "better off" in experiencing the aforementioned inferiority complex;[21] and that descendants of original indigenous peoples to whom $<_{\text{Heir of a}}$ Colonized> is also attributable are also "better off" in living in quite demarcated pieces of land.[22] In contrast, the claim that one is necessarily "better off" in articulating works to which $<_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> is not attributable is very disputable.

Imagine a philosophical academic context in which some authors/professors are involved in the aforementioned wounded knife cycle. In being so, they write essays to which $<_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> is attributable while more or less implicitly minimizing libertarian and egalitarian tendencies and endorsing all sorts of academic practices, such as those of: systematically starting their classes half an hour late; constantly cancelling classes without letting students know in advance; not offering much feedback on students' works; being unprepared to teach the bibliography of their classes; teaching the same class for decades without actualizing the bibliography; using their classes to defend the views of a foreign intellectual authority; being very defensive *vis-à-vis* any objection to this authority; ignoring the works of other members from one's own department

20 For a discussion of this claim vis-à-vis Hegel's works, see Robert Bernasconi (1998).

21 For cases against this claim, see Du Bois (2011), Fanon (1952), X (1973), Gonzalez (2020), Davis (1998), West (1999), etc.

22 For cases against this claim, consider Neves and Machado (2017), Ojong (2020), Paradies (2020), Krenak (2020), etc.

while focusing on those written by foreigners; not carefully guiding as advisors students' undergraduate monographies, master's theses and/or PhD dissertations; sometimes not even attending to students' public defenses of these works; selecting for tenure others who champion similar practices; etc.

In this context, one may be ultimately "better off" in articulating works to which <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> are attributable. First, because, *pace* the stated practices, one may be quite sentimentally attached to one's former professors in finding it difficult to take advice from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Part I, "On the Bestowing Virtue", 3): that "the person of knowledge must not only one's enemies love, but also be able to one's friends hate. / One ill pays a teacher, if one always only a student remains".[23] In the stated context, to articulate works to which <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> is not attributable might also lead one into being: labelled "difficulty" or "arrogant"; ostracized; unemployed; exiled; etc. What is supported in this essay, consequently, is the weaker claim that one is "better off" in articulating such works if one is willing to confront the consequences of doing so while contraposing a right-wing attitude and championing a left-wing one. Let us assume that 'right-wing' qualifies that which minimizes libertarian as well as egalitarian tendencies in showing a satisfaction and seeking to conserve the current balance between these tendencies within a context (say, the described one), regardless of others' dissatisfactions with it. 'Left-wing', suppose, qualifies that which maximizes (or at least seeks to maximize) both or at least one of these tendencies while seeking to change their balance at a given context so that others' dissatisfactions and/or one's own are met.

Let us also bring attention to the fact that the present essay *neither primarily restates claims of a well-established bibliography articulated by a foreign scholarly community;* nor *excessively quotes from works by members of such a community.* In addition, *the technical terminology adopted here was also not borrowed from an intellectual authority*. Moreover, all technical terms were defined (at least to the extent that it is possible to do so in philosophy). Let us also underline *that all sorts of authors from all sorts of traditions were addressed*. This is to avoid any expression of the aforementioned "subtly" philosophically colonized "subtle" violence. This is not to state that all possible others (e.g., those who are specialized in Eastern philosophy) were contemplated. Arguably, no philosophical essay can do that. What is, nonetheless, possible

23 This is our translation. In the original: "*Der Mensch der Erkenntniss muss nicht nur seine Feinde lieben, sondern auch seine Freunde hassen können. / Man vergilt einem Lehrer schlecht, wenn man immer nur der Schüler bleibt*". This suggestion motivated this essay; I aimed to follow it throughout the present work.

and the present essay does is to *neither presuppose an intellectual authority's controversial reading of another foreign authority;* nor *to be unaware or fail to explicitly indicate that to do so is problematic*. As the stated and italicized throughout this section factors indicate, *the present essay has also aimed to have contemporaneity and to be* "*cosmopolitan*" — at least to the extent in which it is possible to be "cosmopolitan". The essay did so while relying on a canonical language of philosophy (English) that is to make this essay easily accessible for international scrutiny. This is so, even if, to use a metaphor, the English spoken in this essay has and is indeed supposed to have an "accent".[24]

In short, <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> does not seem attributable to the present essay, which aims to spell out a more decolonized way of doing philosophy. This is not to state that this is the only way of doing or at least seeking to do so. To put it in Mignolo's terms, the way supported here is "an option, not a mission" (Mignolo, 2018, p. 211). This option yet currently strikes me as being pertinent; it seems to serve, to paraphrase Quijano, to "free" at least myself "from the Eurocentric mirror" that more or less implicitly compels one to write works to which <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> are attributable while aiming to be that which one simply cannot be.[25] With any luck, others, such as members of the $_{\text{co/decoloniality}}$ community, may also find this option helpful *vis-à-vis* their own projects. In conclusion, this option is that of proposing a new use of <$_{\text{"Subtly" Philosophically}}$ Colonized> according to which this predicate is to be applied to philosophical works that have the aforementioned thirteen features or at least most of them, while indicating how one can proceed differently, that is, in articulating essays, such as the very present one, that do not have any of these features.

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24 This "accent", though, is evidently not as strong as that of an author who explicitly seeks to mix English, Spanish and indigenous languages in an upfront literary way, such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987).

25 The alluded passage from Quijano runs as follows: "it is time to learn to free ourselves [from Latin America] from the Eurocentric mirror where our image is always, necessarily, distorted. It is time, finally, to cease being what we are not" (Quijano, 2000, p. 574).

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